



A U.S. Air Force plane drops fire retardant on a burning hillside in the Ranch Fire in Clearlake Oaks, Calif. on Sunday. AP Photo/Josh Edelson

Northern California blazes now largest in state history

LAKEPORT, Calif. (AP) — Twin Northern California blazes fueled by dry vegetation and hot, windy weather grew Monday to become the largest wildfire in state history, becoming the norm as climate change makes the fire season longer and more severe.

The two fires burning a few miles apart and known as the Mendocino Complex are being treated as one incident. It has scorched 283,800 acres, fire officials said Monday.

The fires, north of San Francisco, have burned 75 homes and is only 30 percent contained.

The size of the fires surpasses a blaze last December in Southern California that burned 281,893 acres. It

killed two people, including a firefighter, and destroyed more than 1,000 buildings before being fully contained on Jan. 12.

Hotter weather attributed to climate change is drying out vegetation, creating more intense fires that spread quickly from rural areas to city subdivisions, climate and fire experts say. But they also blame cities and towns that are expanding housing into previously undeveloped areas.

More than 14,000 firefighters are battling over a dozen major blazes throughout California, state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection spokesman Scott McLean said.

"I can remember a couple of years ago when we

saw 10 to 12,000 firefighters in the states of California, Oregon and Washington and never the 14,000 we see now," he said.

Crews did make progress over the weekend against one of the two blazes in the Mendocino Complex with help from water-dropping aircraft, Cal Fire operations chief Charlie Blankenheim said in a video on Facebook.

But the other one is growing after spreading into the Mendocino National Forest.

The complex of fire has been less destructive to property than some of the other wildfires in the state because it is mostly raging in remote areas. But officials say the twin fires threaten 11,300 buildings and some new evacuations were

ordered over the weekend as the flames spread.

Farther north, crews gained ground against a deadly blaze that has destroyed more than 1,000 homes in and around Redding. It was nearly halfway contained, Cal Fire said.

The wildfire about 225 miles north of San Francisco started more than two weeks ago by sparks from the steel wheel of a towed-trailer's flat tire. It killed two firefighters and four residents and displaced more than 38,000 people.

Officials began allowing some residents to return to their neighborhoods. But tens of thousands of others were still evacuated.

Longtime Manafort deputy Rick Gates admits embezzlement

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP) — The government's star witness in the financial fraud trial of Paul Manafort testified Monday that he embezzled hundreds of thousands of dollars from the former Trump campaign chairman — and told jurors that he and Manafort committed crimes together.

Rick Gates, described by witnesses as Manafort's "right-hand man," calmly related his criminal conduct as prosecutors looked to provide jurors with damning testimony from a co-conspirator they say carried out an elaborate offshore tax-evasion and fraud scheme on behalf of his former boss.

Gates, who is expected to continue testifying for several hours Tuesday, has been regarded as a crucial witness for the government ever since he pleaded guilty this year to two felony charges and agreed to cooperate in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into possible ties between Russia and the Trump campaign.

The courtroom testimony brought Gates face-to-face with Manafort, his longtime boss and fellow Trump campaign aide, for the first time since his plea deal. His testimony, given in short, clipped answers as Manafort rarely broke his gaze from the witness stand, follows that of vendors who detailed Manafort's luxurious spending and financial professionals who told jurors how the defendant hid millions of dollars in offshore accounts.

Gates told jurors that



Gates

he siphoned off the money without Manafort's knowledge by filing false expense reports. He also admitted to concealing millions of dollars in foreign bank accounts on Manafort's behalf and to falsifying documents to help his former boss obtain millions of dollars more in bank loans.

"We didn't report the income or the foreign bank accounts," Gates told jurors, noting that he knew he and Manafort were committing crimes each time.

Under questioning from prosecutors, Gates read off the names of more than a dozen shell companies he and Manafort set up in Cyprus, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the United Kingdom to stash the proceeds of Ukrainian political consulting work.

Asked whether the money in the accounts was Manafort's income, Gates said, "it was."

Gates said he repeatedly lied to conceal the bank accounts and, at Manafort's direction, he would classify money that came in as either a loan or income to reduce Manafort's tax burden.

Gates, who also served in a senior role in Donald Trump's presidential campaign, is expected to face aggressive cross-examination once prosecutors are finished questioning him. Manafort's defense signaled early in the trial that they intend to blame Gates for any illegal conduct and to cast him as a liar and embezzler who can't be trusted.

Trump ups sanctions pressure on Iran

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States reimposed stiff economic sanctions on Iran Monday, ratcheting up pressure on the Islamic Republic despite statements of deep dismay from European allies, three months after President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the international accord limiting Iran's nuclear activities.

Trump declared the landmark 2015 agreement had been "horrible," leaving the Iranian government flush with cash to fuel conflict in the Middle East.

Iran accused the U.S. of reneging on the nuclear agreement, signed by the Obama administration, and of causing recent Iranian economic unrest. European allies said they "deeply regret" the U.S. action.

Trump said in a statement, "We urge all nations

to take such steps to make clear that the Iranian regime faces a choice: either change its threatening, destabilizing behavior and reintegrate with the global economy, or continue down a path of economic isolation."

A first set of U.S. sanctions that had been eased under the accord were going into effect at one minute past midnight under an executive order signed by Trump. Those sanctions affect financial transactions that involve U.S. dollars, Iran's automotive sector, the purchase of commercial planes and metals including gold.

A second batch of U.S. sanctions targeting Iran's oil sector and central bank are to be reimposed in early November.

Trump warned that those who don't wind down their economic ties to Iran "risk severe consequences."

The Europeans didn't like any of it.

Despite Trump's claims, the accord "is working and delivering on its goal" of limiting Iran's nuclear program, said a statement by European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and the foreign ministers of France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

The ministers said the Iran deal is "crucial for the security of Europe, the region and the entire world," and the European Union issued a "blocking statute" Monday to protect European businesses from the impact of the sanctions.

A senior administration official, briefing reporters under ground rules requiring anonymity, said the United States is "not particularly concerned" by EU efforts to protect European firms from the sanctions.

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